

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05

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INRE-00 SSO-00 /089 W

-----078633 052134Z /63

O 052100Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4827

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 3052

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PEPR, PINS, DR

SUBJECT: ELECTORAL BOARD ACCEPTS REFORMISTA CHALLENGE AGAINST BOARD
CHAIRMAN

REFS SANTO DOMINGO 2974, SANTO DOMINGO 2904

1. THE THREE MAN CENTRAL ELECTORAL BOARD (JCE) EARLY THIS
AFTERNOON RULED IN FAVOR OF A CHALLENGE (RECUSACION) BY THE
REFORMIST PARTY (PR) AGAINST ITS OWN CHAIRMAN, JOAQUIN MANUEL
CASTILLO, A MEASURE WHICH COULD EFFECTIVELY REMOVE HIM FROM
OFFICE.

2. THE PR CHARGED THAT CASTILLO HAD MADE PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH
SHOWED HIM TO BE PREJUDICED ON THE PR CHALLENGES (IMPUGNACIONES)
TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE BOARD. THE PR HAD CLAIMED THERE WAS FRAUD
PERPETRATED IN THE ELECTIONS WHICH BENEFITED THE PRD, THROUGH
MANIPULATION OF THE COMPUTERIZED VOTER REGISTRATION LISTS OF THE
JCE TO SWITCH REFORMISTA VOTERS FROM ONE POLLING PLACE TO ANOTHER,
THUS CAUSING THEM TO LOSE THEIR VOTE. THE OFFICIAL PARTY ALSO
CLAIMED PROOF OF THIS WAS THE SUPPOSEDLY HIGH VOTER ABSTENTION
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RATE IN THE ELECTIONS (27 PERCENT). CASTILLO WAS QUOTED AS
SAYING, IN THE FACE OF THESE CLAIMS, THAT THE ELECTIONS WERE FAIR
AND CLEAN AND THE VOTER ABSTENTION RATE WAS LOW.

3. ALTHOUGH THE EFFECT OF ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE IN STRICTLY LEGAL
TERMS COULD MERELY BE TO REMOVE CASTILLO FROM ACTING AS JUDGE
IN HEARING THE PR CLAIMS OF PRO-PRD FRAUD, WHICH WOULD BE SRIIOUS

ENOUGH, IT COULD ALSO MEAN THAT CASTILLO WILL BE REPLACED ON THE JCE.

4. THE JCE'S MOVES ARE TAKEN EXTREMELY SERIOUSLY HERE BECAUSE CASTILLO HAS COME TO BE SEEN AS THE SYMBOL OF STRICT ADHERENCE TO LEGAL STANDARDS WITHIN THE JCE AND HE ACTED COURAGEOUSLY TO MAINTAIN THOSE STANDARDS. HIS REMOVAL WILL BE SEEN AS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF LEGAL STEPS AIMED AT UNDOING THROUGH TRICKERY THE PRD VICTORY AT THE POLLS.

5. THE PRD ANNOUNCED THE JCE DECISION ON ITS DAILY RADIO PROGRAM THIS AFTERNOON. IT SAID THE PARTY IS CALLING AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF ITS POLITICAL COMMITTEE, THE INNERMOST DECISION-MAKING BODY OF THE PARTY, TO DECIDE WHAT ACTIONS IT WILL TAKE. PRESIDENT ELECT GUZMAN AND PARTY PRESIDENT SALVADOR JORGE BLANCO, NOW IN SANTIAGO, HAVE BEEN CALLED IN TO ATTEND THE MEETING. THE PRD PROGRAM ASKED PRD SUPPORTERS TO REMAIN CALM BUT ALERT TO POSSIBLE MOVES TO PREVENT THE PRD FROM COMING TO POWER. THE PARTY ALSO SAID IT IS CONTACTING ITS FRIENDS ABROAD CONCERNING THE JCE ACTION.

6. COMMENT. EMBASSY CONSIDERS JCE ACTION TO BE POTENTIALLY SERIOUS, ESPECIALLY IF IT MEANS THAT BOARD HAS BEEN IN SOME WAY MANIPULATED TO BRING ABOUT SUCH A DECISION. WE HAVE TO RESERVE FURTHER COMMENT, HOWEVER, UNTIL MATTER BECOMES MORE CLEAR AND WE HAVE RECEIVED FURTHER PUBLIC REACTION.

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